
The Russian Foreign Ministry says talks with the United States on finding a replacement for the nuclear disarmament treaty are "coming to a close", just hours before the existing treaty, the START 1 agreement signed in 1991, is due to expire. Tom Esslemont reports:

In spite of **frenetic diplomatic activity** between Washington and Moscow and **the 'reset' of relations** between the two sides, it was always going to be difficult for a new arms control treaty **to come into force** before Friday's **deadline**, and so talks will continue after the old START agreement **expires**.

Kremlin sources appear optimistic that something can be agreed while President Obama is in Europe next week to receive his Nobel Peace Prize.

But the details of the new, complex agreement have not been finalised. It will also need to be **ratified** in both parliaments and that could take months. The United States has indicated that it wants **an interim agreement** to allow it to continue to observe Russia's nuclear arsenals once Friday's **deadline** passes. But that has also still not been **formalised**.

In July President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev signed a joint understanding that would see reductions of deployed nuclear warheads to below 1,700 each within seven years of a new treaty, **a huge cut on** Soviet-era levels.

Tom Esslemont, BBC News, Moscow

Vocabulary and definitions

frenetic diplomatic activity	here, a great number of high-level meetings and talks between people who manage relations between the two countries
the reset of relations	when two sides begin to maintain contacts and make dealings in a new way, different than in the past
to come into force	to become effective/valid
deadline	if you have a deadline, you must do something by a certain time
expires	stops being effective/valid, is out of date
ratified	officially approved
an interim agreement	a temporary agreement, an agreement that will be valid until a more long-term one can be signed
formalised	here, made official
a huge cut on	a lot fewer than

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